



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Natalie Burfoot Billing, Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Paulann H. Sheets, Thomas J. Skrmetti, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, December 21, 2004

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Harry Watson called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Billing, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Skrmetti
Members Absent: Councilor Wright

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Office Assistant Maegan Paquette.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

Mayor Watson read a letter sent to Ron Chappell, the former long-time Chairman of the Shellfish Commission, complimenting the Town's shellfish enforcement officers and commission for their hard work and dedication.

IV. CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Genevieve Cerf, 17 Crescent Street, Groton Long Point, member of the Groton Open Space Commission and member of the RTM, thanked the Zoning Commission for not adopting new regulations concerning active senior housing. She would like to see the Town Council put referral 2004-0321GOSA / Planning Issue on the Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion. Ms. Cerf spoke about the ill effect dense housing would have on the wetlands in Town. She distributed a handout to the Town Council with information concerning freshwater biodiversity in crisis.

John Higgins, 28 Hartford Court, spoke about his concern that there is gang activity taking place in Town. Mr. Higgins noted that at a recent pep rally held at Fitch High School gang members physically assaulted other teens. He has addressed this issue with the Police Department and is not satisfied with their response. The school administration has shown more concern and has been proactive in their approach to the situation. Mr. Higgins feels the High School is not promoting a healthy atmosphere by letting this behavior continue. His own child is afraid to go to school. He would like the Town Council to take action on this situation in some manner.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Councilor Kolnaski suggested that Mr. Higgins contact the Board of Education with his concerns regarding gang activity taking place at Fitch High School.

2004-0342

Safety Issues at Fitch High School

SAFETY ISSUES AT FITCH HIGH SCHOOL

Mayor Watson made a referral to the Public Safety Committee to address the Citizens Petition of Mr. John Higgins of 28 Hartford Court, that there is gang activity taking place at Fitch High School.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilor Skrmetti thanked the residents and organizations that made Social Services donations.

a. Approval of Minutes**2004-0339 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)**

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council of December 7, 2004 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List**2003-0256 Eastern Regional Tourism District - Appointment**

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0319 Town Clerk Compensation

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0336 2005 Rates for Shennecossett Golf Course

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0338 Job Descriptions for Police Department

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

c. Special Trust Fund Contributions**2004-0335 Special Trust Fund Contributions**

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Various Donations - \$192.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
Various Donations - \$8.50 - Recreation Discretionary
Patti Andersen - \$40.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Anonymous - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Mary Bosko - \$55.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Groton Post Office - \$275.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Lawncrest Apartments - \$1,000.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Jean Murray - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Mystic Rotary - \$30.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Old Mystic Baptist Church - \$120.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Pfizer Inc - \$2,000.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Richard and Glenn Ross and Harriet Macdonald - Social Services Discretionary
S. B. Butler Elementary School - \$85.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Robert & Renate Schneider - \$25.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Charity & Relief Lodge 72 R.H. Barrows Charity Fund - \$100.00 - D.A.R.E.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Skrmetti, seconded by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously.

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)**a. Town Councilors**

Councilor O'Beirne received approximately eleven e-mails from residents, the majority of whom were satisfied with the Town's current level of services. The residents would like the services maintained even if taxes have to be raised slightly.

Councilor Kolnaski received the same responses via telephone from citizens as Councilor O'Beirne.

She attended the Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Liaison Committee meeting held on December 15, 2004. Discussion at the meeting included the administrators' contract, medical insurance, and the proposed ordinance on underage drinking.

Councilor Kolnaski also attended the Permanent School Building Committee meeting this month.

Councilors Bartinik, Billing, Bond, Skrmetti, and Sheets received the same e-mails as Councilor O'Beirne.

Councilor Skrmetti received an e-mail from resident John Sutherland requesting an inventory of Town services from each department. Councilor Skrmetti remembers discussing this request previously in other meetings. He feels it would be a good tool to have during the budget process.

Councilor Bond agrees with Councilor Skrmetti and would like to have an overall inventory of department services and employee hours to use during the budget process.

Councilor Sheets would like the schools to be involved in the 2005 Tercentennial celebration. She spoke with Tercentennial Chairperson Duncan Stoddard and proposed that the schools somehow incorporate the Tercentennial into their curriculum for next year. She will meet with Councilor Kolnaski to put together ideas for the schools to consider.

Mayor Watson attended the Committee of Chairpersons meeting on December 9, the COG Legislative breakfast in Norwich on December 10, the Mystic Cooperative Task Force meeting at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce on December 13, and a COG meeting in Norwich at the COG office on December 15.

Mayor Watson noted that his meeting with City Mayor Popp was postponed.

He received numerous e-mails from residents pleased with the current level of services. He received a compliment from a resident that Route 1 looks very good with the new businesses and building improvements that have been completed in the past year.

2004-0343 Conflict of Interest

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Councilor Skrmetti requested a referral to the Committee of the Whole to discuss conflict of interest of elected officials also serving as representatives of private organizations on town boards or committees.

2004-0344 Town Department Services/Employee Hours Study

TOWN DEPARTMENT SERVICES/EMPLOYEE HOURS STUDY

Councilor Skrmetti requested a referral to the Committee of the Whole to discuss managers generating a list of department services and employee hours to use as a tool during the budget process.

b. Representative Town Meeting

None.

c. Clerk of the Council

None.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that effective January 4, 2005 Assistant Police Chief Kelly Fogg will be appointed Acting Police Chief when Chief David Vanasse retires on January 3, 2005. Mr. Oefinger noted that the new owners of the Allyn-Bohlander Property in Mystic will be sending a letter to the Town in mid January requesting a meeting with the Town Council. Mr. Oefinger distributed the draft of the Golf Course Study. He would like the Council to review it prior to arranging a presentation by the Golf Course Consultant in January. Director of Administrative Services Doug Ackerman will be Acting Town Manager from December 27 through December 30, 2004 as Mr. Oefinger will be out of the office.

2004-0345 Grant for West Side Middle School Gym Floor Replacement

GRANT FOR WEST SIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM FLOOR REPLACEMENT

Town Manager Mark Oefinger received a letter from Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Mitchell concerning replacement of the gym floor at West Side Middle School. Mr. Oefinger requested a referral to the Committee of the Whole, as part of the process, so that the Board of Education can apply for a grant in order to obtain partial reimbursement for the project.

e. Town Attorney

None.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Billing

No meeting. No report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

No meeting. No report.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting. No report.

d. Environment & Recreation - Chairman Sheets

No meeting. No report.

e. Finance - Chairman Wright

No meeting. No report.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman O'Beirne

Chairman O'Beirne read the minutes of the committee meeting held on December 14, 2004, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Skrmetti

No meeting. No report.

h. Public Works - Chairman Bartinik

No meeting. No report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

Mayor Watson noted that the Committee of the Whole met on December 14, 2004, and a member of the Subbase Realignment Committee explained the BRAC process to the Councilors. The Committee of the Whole held a meeting tonight at 6:00 p.m. with the local State Legislators.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2003-0256 Eastern Regional Tourism District - Appointment

RESOLUTION APPOINTING NANCIE KEENAN TO THE EASTERN REGIONAL TOURISM

DISTRICT

RESOLVED, that Nancie Keenan is appointed as the Town of Groton's representative to the Eastern Connecticut Regional Tourism District, to serve until replaced by the Town Council.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2004-0319

Town Clerk Compensation

RESOLUTION ADOPTING TOWN CLERK 'S COMPENSATION

RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk shall receive a 3% increase in salary effective January 1, 2005 which effectively increases her salary from \$75,931 to \$78,209.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Billing, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Skrmetti
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Sheets

2004-0336

2005 Rates for Shennecossett Golf Course

RESOLUTION SETTING 2005 RATES FOR THE SHENNECOSSETT GOLF COURSE

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton's Shennecossett Golf Course operates as an enterprise fund, apart from the Town's general fund budget, and

WHEREAS, the Shennecossett Enterprise Fund is intended to have a balanced budget, and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Department has proposed an increase of 3%, while the Groton Parks and Recreation Commission has recommended an 8% increase in fees, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered the economic choices between obtaining increased revenue through higher fees, which could yield reduced volume of business, compared to a smaller fee increase which is more likely to prevent a loss of business, and

WHEREAS, the Town is awaiting receipt of a comprehensive management study on the golf course, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council may raise or lower rates during the coming year in order to implement new policies or to correct fiscal imbalances, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the rates for the year 2005 shall be the rates as proposed by Golf Course staff.

A motion was made by Councilor Skrmetti, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor Skrmetti met with the Parks and Recreation Commission and spoke with the Parks and Recreation Staff regarding their differences in proposed increases to the Golf Course fees. The Commission originally proposed an eleven percent increase but lowered it to eight percent as a compromise. The staff has recommended a three percent increase which is being voted on tonight. Councilor Skrmetti feels that the three percent increase should get passed tonight. He would like a joint meeting with the Staff, Commission and Town Council to discuss the Golf Course Consultant's recommendations. He would be open to another increase to the Golf Course fees in the near future.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that it is up to the Town Council to make the final decision on the Golf Course fees. The Staff and Commission merely present their opinions to the Council

for consideration. Mr. Oefinger feels that the current rate structure is counterproductive and an increase needs to be made tonight. He agrees it would be a good idea for all parties to receive a presentation from the Golf Course Consultant that performed the study to see what his recommendations are.

Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby spoke about the procedure that is undertaken every year to increase the golf course fees. He noted that due to the golf course study this year's timeline was not the same as in previous years. He received mixed opinions from staff and the commission as to how much the fees should increase. He started by presenting the lower fee for approval because the increase needs to go into effect by January 1, 2005. He would like a joint meeting after January 1, 2005 between the staff and commission to review the consultants recommendations for any further increases to the rates.

Councilor Billing referred to other golf courses in the State and noted that the Towns current fees are in the mid range; some are higher and some are lower. She would like to see the rates increased more than three percent. She noted that it would be productive to know what other golf courses plan on raising their rates to for the new year.

Motion to Amend to a five percent increase was made by Councilor Billing, seconded by Councilor Skrmetti.

Councilor Billing supports a higher increase in the fees because other golf courses will most likely be increasing their rates and she would like to see the Town's course remain in the mid price range.

Councilor Bartinik does not agree that it can be assumed that other golf courses in the State will be raising their rates. He noted there is no guarantee that others will raise their rates as many are in the private sector.

Councilor Sheets noted that she is surprised a rate increase was proposed without the staff and commission reading the consultant's study. She feels the situation should be evaluated after the study is complete and reviewed. The Town spent money on hiring a consultant for his opinion and it has not been considered.

Councilor O'Beirne feels that there is no basis for the five percent proposed amendment by Councilor Billing. He feels the staff and commission each had a basis for its proposed increase. He does not support this amendment.

The Motion to Amend the golf course fee to a five percent increase failed. 1 In Favor, (Councilor Billing), 7 Opposed.

The motion carried unanimously.

2004-0338

Job Descriptions for Police Department

RESOLUTION APPROVING JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE GROTON TOWN POLICE

WHEREAS, many job descriptions for the Groton Town Police Department have not been updated and revised for approximately thirty years, and

WHEREAS, the Human Resources Division and the Chief of Police have thoroughly reviewed their job descriptions to conform to current requirements such as motor vehicle and weapons qualifications, and

WHEREAS, our emphasis on Community Policing requires the inclusion of police duties relating to their extensive public contacts, and

WHEREAS, it is important to conform these job descriptions to long-standing provisions of our collective bargaining agreements, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves the following Job Descriptions:

Police Chief
Assistant Chief of Police
Police Captain
Training Lieutenant
Detective Lieutenant
Lieutenant
Police Sergeant
Detective Sergeant
Detective
Youth Officer
Patrol Officer
Animal Control Officer

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted a minor revision to the language of the job descriptions under the title of Certificates and Licenses. This revision applies to all the positions with the exception of the Animal Control Officer.

The motion carried unanimously.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn at 8:40 p.m. was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Skrmetti and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

*Maegan Paquette
Office Assistant*